



**Testimony of Don Ciosek, State President of AARP  
Transportation Appropriations  
February 9, 2009**

AARP opposes Governor Rell's recommendation to eliminate funding for demand responsive transportation for seniors and people with disabilities (CT General Statutes 13-b-38bb). And, on behalf of our 629,000 AARP members in Connecticut, AARP asks this committee to restore those Dial-A-Ride municipal matching grant funds.

Transportation remains a high priority for AARP in this legislative session because mobility options are essential for seniors to remain independent and active as they age. Public transportation is not readily available to all residents in Connecticut, especially residents in less dense suburban and rural areas. The lack of transportation options often leaves older adults and people with disabilities stranded. They lose their independence and are unable to work, get to medical appointments, go shopping, and attend social events and religious activities.

Demand responsive transportation services (dial-a-ride) provide essential access to the community for people who are 60 years or older or have a disability and do not have access to public transportation. These services often mean the difference between remaining mobile and independent in their community or being institutionalized in a nursing home.

In 1999 AARP volunteers organized to help pass CT General Statute 13b-38bb, which directed the Commissioner of Transportation to establish a state matching grant program to help municipalities expand demand responsive transportation for the elderly (persons 60 and older) and people with disabilities. The proposed funding level was \$5 million when the law passed. To ensure equality for all 169 municipalities the allocation formula would be based 50% on elderly population and 50% on square mileage of a municipality. Unfortunately, Connecticut General Statute 13b-38bb wasn't implemented for over 6 years because funding had not been appropriated.

Then in 2005 with the hard work of some of the members of this committee and other legislators, the program was finally funded with a 2-year \$10 million dollar funding mechanism and again in the last biennium. These grants are matched with local funds to provide transportation services to the elderly and disabled. Since 2005, the municipal matching grant program has been tremendously successful at expanding dial-a-ride transportation for seniors and people with disabilities in over 136 Towns.

The municipal matching grant program also helps our communities provide transportation to those disabled and elderly who have had to quit driving without forcing them to give up the things they love, their mobility or their independence. We know that about 480,000 people over the age of 65 live in Connecticut and surveys indicate that one in five of those residents no longer drive.

AARP research has shown that over half of the non-drivers over age 65 stay home on any given day. The reasons for this include their declining health, their physical limitations, and their concern over driving safely and that they have no access to transportation.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project provided some statistics about this problem. Compared with older drivers, older non-drivers in the United States make:

- 15% fewer trips to the doctor
- 59% fewer shopping trips and visits to restaurants, and
- 65% fewer trips for social and visits to restaurants.

These older non-drivers are dependent on others, who may or may not be available. When they can't get out, this can lead to depression, illness and eventually to living in nursing homes. Just think, if you had to give up your own car and couldn't drive for a couple of weeks— What would you do? How would you get around? The municipal matching grant program allows towns to expand their demand responsive transportation and keep seniors active in the community.

The municipal matching grant program for demand responsive transportation has been one of the most successful senior transportation programs in state history. Please renew the funding for this vital program.